(b) if so, whether Government have taken any steps in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) The confirmation of Postal employees in different grades is an on going process. The employees on their first appointment are kept on probation. Subsequently they are considered for confirmation after successful completion of probation as per rules.

(b) and (c) Confirmation in a grade is considered as per rules whenever is due. In this regard the Department of Posts follow the instructions of the nodal Department *i.e.* Department of Personnel and Training.

Telecom Services in Ferozepur and Faridkot districts

†2624. SHRIMATI GURCHARAN KAUR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken by Government so far to improve rural telecom services in Ferozepur and Faridkot districts in Punjab;

(b) whether there is any proposal to introduce mobile telephone services in these districts; and

(c) if so, by when these are likely to be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) The following steps have been taken to improve the telecome services in the Rural areas of Ferozepur and Faridkot District of Punjab.

(i) All the rural exchanges have been converted to digital exchanges.

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†. Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(ii) All the rural exchanges have been provided with reliable media.

(iii) Centralized operation and maintenance Centres are proposed to be opened for rural exchanges for better maintenance of telephones in villages.

(b) Sir, mobile telephone service is planned in both Ferozepur and Faridkot district. In Phase-I, 2000 lines in Ferozepur City, 1500 lines in Abohar City and 1000 lines in Faridkot City are proposed to be provided.

(c) Service in these cities is likely to start in the 4th quarter of year 2002.

Status of Post Offices in Punjab

†2625. SHRIMATI GURCHARAN KAUR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) what is the status of Post Offices in Punjab;

(b) whether every village of the State has facility of Post Office;

(c) if not, the number of the villages in each district not having any facility of Post Office; and

(d) the details of the steps taken by Government to enhance postal services and cover all villages in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) 21 Head Post Offices, 782 Sub-Post Offices and 3093 Branch Post Offices are functioning at present in Punjab.

(d) and (c) All villages in Punjab have facility of daily delivery and collection of mails and sale of Stamps and Stationery.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.